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## MA THESIS HALL OF FAME

### L2 LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OF INTERACTIONAL FEEDBACK

KRISTEN LORINCZ

#### ABSTRACT

*The production of comprehensible output is an integral component of learning a second language (Swain, 1985). To facilitate the development of communicative competence, teachers often provide oral corrective feedback to their students during interaction. In theory, this enables second language (L2) learners to recognize the manner in which their output either aligns or deviates from target norms (Long, 1996; Gass, 2008). Previous research on interactional feedback has largely focused on the comparative efficacy of various types of interactional feedback, namely prompts and recasts. The aim of this study, which is an expanded replication of a study conducted by Mackey, Gass and McDonough (2000), was to investigate learner perceptions of interactional feedback and its intended targets. Eight ESL students participated in a dyadic task with a teacher, during which they were provided feedback in response to a variety of errors. Subsequently, the students and teacher both completed stimulated recall interviews as a means of introspecting about their thoughts during each of the feedback episodes. The results revealed that although the interactional feedback was generally salient to learners, the errors which triggered that feedback were not. More specifically, the learners were generally accurate in their perceptions of lexical feedback, but were typically unable to identify the target of morphosyntactic and phonological feedback. Instead, the majority of the feedback was misinterpreted as being about semantics. Essentially, this suggests that there is a disconnect between teachers and students regarding oral corrective feedback, as learners may be more focused on meaning, rather than form.*

#### 1.0 Introduction

Educators and researchers in the field of second language (L2) acquisition have long sought to determine the most effective pedagogical methods and practices. Consequently, substantial research has been conducted regarding the various factors which may conduce L2 learning. The role of interaction in L2 acquisition is one such topic that has been examined in depth in recent years. Empirical studies have demonstrated that language learning is facilitated through authentic communication (Long, 1996; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Naturally, many language instructors around the world have adopted a communicative approach to language teaching as a result of this research. Subsequently, as teachers encourage use of the target language in their classrooms, they must consider how to provide feedback to their students concerning the accuracy of their utterances. Researchers have claimed that the provision of oral feedback is integral to L2 acquisition because it highlights the manner in which a

learner's speech either aligns or deviates from targetlike forms, and enables them to modify their output accordingly (Long, 1996; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Over the past several decades, there has been a steady influx of research emerging regarding the impact of interaction on L2 acquisition. The bulk of these studies have focused on the comparative efficacy of various types of oral feedback in relation to the acquisition of L2 forms (Amar & Spada, 2006; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; Yang & Lyster, 2010). Fewer studies have analyzed learner perceptions of interactional feedback, suggesting there is a significant gap in the research (Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Gass and Selinker (2008) define feedback as information which either highlights the success, or lack of success, of learner utterances. Research regarding the use of oral feedback is grounded in the interaction-based approach to L2 acquisition. The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) claims that L2 development is facilitated through communication. Long (1996) described the relationship between interaction and L2 acquisition as follows: "Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interaction adjustments by the native speaker or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (p. 451-452). Likewise, Gass and Selinker (2008) assert that L2 learning occurs as a result of input, output and "feedback that comes as a result of interaction" (p. 317). Thus, the interaction-based approach not only claims that interaction facilitates L2 acquisition, but also that oral corrective feedback contributes to L2 development by prompting learners to adjust their speech in an effort to make it more comprehensible and nativelike (Long, 1996).

One component of interactionist theory that sheds further light on the role of oral corrective feedback is the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985). The Output Hypothesis claims that production of comprehensible output is vital to L2 acquisition (Swain, 1985). The need to produce coherent output in the course of communication forces learners to move from a focus on "semantic processing to syntactic processing," in an effort to produce utterances that are intelligible (Swain, 1985, p. 249). A major component of L2 acquisition, according to this hypothesis, is that learners must develop and test language hypotheses regarding the structures and meanings of the target language (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Interactional feedback, therefore, is an important part of this process, because it allows learners to verify those hypotheses through communication with native or more competent speakers (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Gass, 2003).

The interaction approach to L2 acquisition is often applied to classroom practices through the use of form-focused instruction. Yang and Lyster (2010) define form-focused instruction as "any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly" (p. 236). The use of this method typically involves introducing target forms and features through interaction rather than as isolated concepts (Yang & Lyster, 2010). Essentially, learners acquire new forms through

meaningful communicative tasks. Researchers claim that this enables easier retrieval of these forms in future communicative contexts (Yang & Lyster, 2010). Oral corrective feedback is an important component of form-focused instruction as it promotes noticing of various target forms (Yang & Lyster, 2010).

## 2.1 Interactional Feedback Types

Most interaction-based research categorizes oral corrective feedback in terms of a dichotomy between prompts and recasts (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Both of these feedback types are used with the intent of highlighting learner errors as they occur in the course of interaction. There is, however, a fundamental difference in the nature of prompts and recasts. Egi (2010) describes this difference as a “distinction between feedback that reformulates learners’ utterances by offering L2 models and feedback that elicits or prompts learner-generated responses while withholding such models” (p. 3).

Recasts are an immediate reformulation of an erroneous L2 utterance which maintains the original meaning (Ammar & Spada, 2006). Essentially, recasts not only highlight that an error has been made, they also provide learners with a corrected version of their utterance. Yang and Lyster (2010) provide the following interaction as an example of the use of recasts (p. 243):

Student: *And they have a happy life after and many years they have a lot of kid around the...*

Teacher: *They had...*

Student: *They had a lot of kids around the palace.*

Some researchers have claimed that recasts “help L2 learners notice the discrepancy between their nonnativelike utterance and the targetlike form” (Amar & Spada, 2006, p. 544). Due to their implicit and unobtrusive nature, many researchers consider recasts to be an ideal feedback technique (Amar & Spada, 2006).

There are, however, a number of concerns regarding the use of recasts. When recasts are provided through interaction, learners may fail to notice them, or if they are noticed, their purpose may be misinterpreted. One of the major caveats of recasts is highlighted by Lyster (1998). In his analysis of recasts in the content-based classroom, Lyster (1998) observed that recasts and noncorrective repetitions were often used interchangeably and fulfilled similar roles. Thus, Lyster (1998) concluded that recasts can be quite ambiguous, and therefore difficult for learners to recognize the purposes for which they are intended by teachers. Amar and Spada (2006) also found that “the corrective nature of recasts may be obscured by their formal and functional overlap with repetitions” (p. 545). Essentially, learners may misinterpret recasts as being about confirmation of meaning rather than correction. Thus, the use and usefulness of recasts clearly remains in question.

Prompts or negotiation, conversely, do not provide learners with a corrected version of their erroneous utterances. Instead, prompts emphasize that an error has been made, and

incite learners to reformulate their utterances. There are a variety of forms of prompts including clarification requests, repetition of learner errors, metalinguistic clues and elicitation (Yang & Lyster, 2010). Yang and Lyster (2010) provide the following dialogues as examples (p. 243-244):

Clarification Request

Student: *Why does he fly to Korea last year?*

Teacher: *Pardon?*

Student: *Why did he fly to Korea last year?*

Repetition

Student: *Mrs. Jones travel a lot last year.*

Teacher: *Mrs. Jones travel a lot last year?*

Student: *Mrs. Jones traveled a lot last year.*

Metalinguistic Clues

Student: *I went to the train station and pick up my aunt.*

Teacher: *Use past tense consistently.*

Student: *I went to the train station and picked up my aunt.*

Elicitation

Student: *Once upon a time, there lives a poor girl named Cinderella.*

Teacher: *Once upon a time, there...*

Student: *There lived a girl.*

Gass and Selinker (2008) claim that prompts force L2 learners to analyze and correct their erroneous utterances by producing modified output, which, according to interactionist theory, may be a facilitator of L2 acquisition. In addition, Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) also affirm that prompts are beneficial to L2 learning because they invoke a deeper level of processing “that entails both retrieval and production mechanisms” (p. 483).

## 2.2 Learner Responses to Interactional Feedback

Learners may respond to interactional feedback in a number of ways. Naturally, learners do not respond to oral corrective feedback after every occurrence. This may be due to the lack of noticing or misinterpretation of the feedback given. Students may also produce uptake in response to interactional feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) define uptake as a learner utterance which immediately follows feedback and “that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher’s intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student’s initial utterance” (p. 49). Learners may produce uptake in several different forms: either as a simple acknowledgement of the feedback or by reformulating their errors (Egi, 2010). One particular type of uptake is modified output, which generally involves learners modifying the nonnativelike forms in their utterances (Egi, 2010). Uptake and modified output may be produced either covertly or overtly (Egi, 2010). That is, learners may respond to feedback either audibly or inaudibly. Therefore, if a learner

does not respond to feedback provided by a teacher, it cannot be automatically assumed that they did not recognize or understand the feedback.

Learner responses to interactional feedback have been linked to L2 development. Egi (2010) conducted a study which correlated learner responses to subsequent L2 learning. This study analyzed the relationship between uptake, modified output, learner perceptions of recasts, and L2 development (Egi, 2010). Egi (2010) found that learners recognized recasts as feedback more frequently in cases which ended in uptake. Furthermore, learners were significantly “more likely to not only report understanding recasts as corrective feedback, but also to explicitly identify the mismatch between the interlanguage and L2” (Egi, 2010, p. 17) in feedback episodes which involved successful repair by the learners. Thus, modified output was strongly correlated with recognition of both feedback and its intended targets (Egi, 2010).

### **2.3 The Role of Prompts and Recasts in L2 Acquisition**

Numerous empirical studies have been conducted in an effort to determine the relationship between interactional feedback and L2 development (Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000; Yang & Lyster, 2010; Mackey, 2006; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Egi, 2010; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; Amar & Spada, 2006). The bulk of these studies have investigated the differential outcomes which emerge through the use of varying types of oral corrective feedback.

Lyster and Saito (2006) made a particularly significant contribution to the study of oral corrective feedback by conducting a meta-analysis of fifteen empirical studies regarding the efficacy of interactional feedback on L2 learning. The results of this analysis found that the most effective types of feedback across the involved studies were prompts and explicit correction, whereas recasts were found to be considerably less effective. Provision of any feedback type was, however, found to be more beneficial to L2 learning than no feedback (Lyster & Saito, 2006).

Amar and Spada (2006) conducted a study comparing the differential impact of prompts and recasts as means of feedback. This study occurred over a four week period, during which participants were provided with form-focused instruction regarding third-person determiners in English (Amar & Spada, 2006). The subjects were divided into three groups based on the type of feedback they would receive from the researchers: prompts, recasts, and no feedback. Through the use of a pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test design, Ammar and Spada (2006) found that although all three groups benefited from form-focused instruction, the experimental groups significantly outperformed the control group. This indicates that the use of feedback aided the acquisition of the target syntactic forms. Moreover, prompts were found to be more effective than recasts, though their efficacy was largely contingent on the proficiency of the participants (Ammar and Spada, 2006). Higher proficiency learners benefited almost equally from both prompts and recasts, whereas lower proficiency learners benefited considerably less from recasts in comparison to prompts (Ammar & Spada, 2006).

Another study by Yang and Lyster (2010) further supported the findings yielded by other researchers. They investigated the influence of the provision of prompts and recasts on the acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms in English. Much like the aforementioned study, this study employed a pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test design. In addition, the subjects were again divided into three groups according to the types of feedback they would receive: form-focused instruction only, form-focused instruction and recasts, and form-focused instruction and prompts (Yang & Lyster, 2010). Analogous to the findings from previous research, this study found that both prompts and recasts were more effective than form-focused instruction alone. The provision of prompts yielded larger benefits for increasing accurate use of regular past tense forms, whereas prompts and recasts had similar effects on the acquisition of irregular past tense forms (Yang & Lyster, 2010). Thus, the results of this study were mixed in terms of the comparative efficacy of prompts and recasts.

Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) also contributed to the body of research regarding interactional feedback. Similar to the previously described studies, Lyster and Izquierdo (2009) conducted a study which analyzed the differential effects of prompts and recasts on L2 learning in dyadic interactions. The participants of this study were French foreign language learners studying grammatical gender. Each of the subjects participated in three hours of form-focused instruction, followed by two individual meetings with either native or near-native speakers of French. (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009). During these meetings, the participants took part in three oral tasks and received corrective feedback either in the form of prompts or recasts. The results from pre-tests and post-tests revealed that both groups significantly improved their accuracy in the use of French grammatical gender (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009). In addition, the two groups demonstrated similar gains. Lyster & Izquierdo (2009) hypothesized that these benefits were due to a number of factors: “learners receiving recasts benefited from the repeated exposure to positive exemplars as well as from opportunities to infer negative evidence, whereas learners receiving prompts benefited from the repeated exposure to negative evidence as well as from opportunities to produce modified output” (p. 453).

Though this review of literature regarding the efficacy of interactional feedback is by no means exhaustive, the aforementioned studies highlight the predominant trends in this area of research. The provision of feedback through interaction has been shown to be an effective tool for language learning and development. Furthermore, the majority of the studies in this field research the comparative effectiveness of prompts and recasts. Though a number of studies suggest that prompts are more effective than recasts, this still remains somewhat unclear, and may be contingent on various factors. Learner perceptions of interactional feedback, however, is a closely related topic that has been researched considerably less in recent years.

#### **2.4 Learner Perceptions of Oral Corrective Feedback**

Research has suggested that the effectiveness of oral corrective feedback is largely contingent on whether it is noticed by learners (Gass & Selinker, 2008). This is highlighted by the Noticing Hypothesis, which stipulates that “learners must consciously

notice input in order for it to become intake” (Mackey, 2006, p. 408). In an effort to reveal more about the nature of the relationship between noticing and interactional feedback, a study was conducted regarding learner perceptions and recognition of feedback (Mackey et al, 2000).

Mackey et al (2000) investigated the extent to which beginner and low-intermediate learners were able to recognize feedback provided through interaction, as well as the linguistic target of that feedback. The primary aim of this study was to research “the perceptions of learners regarding conversational interaction involving negotiation, which occurs when there is a breakdown in communication, and learners or NSs reformulate their utterances in an effort to achieve message comprehensibility” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 477). The study involved ten ESL learners and seven Italian foreign language learners. Each of the subjects participated in a brief communicative task with a native or near-native speaking interviewer, which was videotaped. Immediately following the completion of this task, the video was used as the stimulus for a stimulated recall session (Mackey et al, 2000). The researcher watched the video with each of the individual students, paused it after each feedback episode, and asked the learners to describe their thoughts at the time the feedback was provided (Mackey et al, 2000). The results of the stimulated recall sessions revealed a number of implications regarding learner perceptions of interactional feedback.

Mackey et al (2000) found that learner perceptions of interactional feedback varied in relation to the target of the feedback. The learners were most frequently able to recognize corrective feedback and the target of the feedback when it was provided in response to phonological or lexical errors; conversely, learners were generally “inaccurate in their perceptions about morphosyntactic feedback” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 490). In correlation with the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996), this study further supports the claim that interaction can result in feedback that draws attention to how learner utterances deviate from nativelike use. Mackey et al (2000) point out that if learners’ verbalized perceptions of feedback can be equated with noticing, “the findings of this study are consistent with the claims of the Interaction Hypothesis, at least with regard to the lexicon and phonology” (p. 490). The results, however, are less clear in relation to morphosyntax (Mackey et al, 2000).

The results of this study suggest that there is a noteworthy relationship between learner perceptions of interactional feedback and L2 learning through interaction. Thus, it is of interest to research the abilities of learners to notice and recognize interactional feedback. Therefore, I researched this topic further, in an effort to further elaborate on learner perceptions of oral feedback in relation to L2 learning. To do so, I replicated the methodology used by Mackey et al (2000) in order to compare our findings. In addition, the learners in this study will possess intermediate or higher English language proficiency, whereas the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) involved beginner to low-intermediate learners; thus, the findings of this study will yield insight on the generalizability of the results from the study by Mackey et al (2000).



### **3.0 Research Questions**

To accurately compare my findings with those from previous studies, the first two research questions are the same as those proposed by Mackey et al (2000, p. 477). The latter questions have been added in an effort to establish broader implications for language teachers in regard to interactional feedback. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

1. Do ESL learners recognize oral corrective feedback provided through interaction?
2. Do ESL learners recognize the target of interactional feedback?
3. Do ESL learners notice particular types of interactional feedback more than others?
4. Is there a disconnect between teacher intentions and student perceptions regarding interactional feedback?

### **4.0 Methodology: Participants**

There were a total of eight participants involved in this study. The subjects possessed intermediate or higher English language proficiency, and were all students in their first year of college at a four-year university in the central region of the United States. Each of the subjects was also enrolled in a college-level ESL program. The genders, ages and linguistic backgrounds of the participants varied.

There were also two female, native-speaking teachers involved in this study. Both were graduate assistants teaching university-level ESL courses with an average of four years of teaching experience.

### **4.1 Instruments**

The instrument that was used to elicit interactional feedback episodes was a pair of cartoon pictures. These pictures were identical, with the exception of ten discrepancies, and were thus used for a spot the difference task. The pair of pictures used followed a number of guidelines suggested by Gass and Mackey (2007). First, the images contained items that were easy for intermediate language learners to describe; they also contained several objects which are typically less known by L2 learners of this proficiency, in an effort to initiate negotiation and ensure sufficient opportunities for interactional feedback (Gass & Mackey, 2007). The pictures were also separated by a small barrier as recommended by Gass and Mackey (2007) to ensure that participants could not see the corresponding pictures.

### **4.2 Procedure**

The methodology used for this study was largely replicated from Mackey et al (2000). Data was elicited through two separate tasks. First, each subject participated in a dyadic spot the difference task with a native-speaking teacher. To do so, the participant and teacher each received a picture. Both pictures were identical with the exception of several discrepancies (Mackey et al, 2000). Before the task began, the researcher informed the participants that there were ten differences between their pictures. Then, each subject was asked to determine these inconsistencies by communicating with the

teacher. During the interaction, the teacher provided interactional feedback to the student whenever they produced a nonnativelike utterance (Mackey et al, 2000). In an effort to replicate the methodology used by Mackey et al (2000), the teachers were “instructed to provide interactional feedback wherever it seemed appropriate and in whatever form seemed appropriate during the interaction” (p. 479). Thus, feedback provided by the teachers occurred in the form of both prompts and recasts, and was targeted at variety of linguistic errors, including morphosyntactic, lexical, phonological, and semantic errors (Mackey et al, 2000). These teacher-student interactions were videotaped.

Subsequently, stimulated recall interviews were used as an introspective measure to reveal learner perceptions of the feedback episodes from the previously described interactions. Gass and Mackey (2007) describe stimulated recalls as a means of investigating the thought processes or strategies of learners by prompting them to “recall and report thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event” (p. 53). To do so, the video of each interaction was rewound and viewed by the researcher and student immediately after the completion of the spot the difference task (Mackey et al, 2000). Using the video as a stimulus, the researcher paused the video after each interactional feedback episode and asked the participants to introspect about their thoughts at the time of the original occurrence (Mackey et al, 2000). Stimulated recall interviews were also conducted with the teachers following half of their interactions with the students, in an effort to determine their intentions regarding the interactional feedback they provided to the students. Stimulated recall sessions were audio recorded for transcription using a digital voice recorder owned by the researcher.

## 5.0 Analysis

There were two sets of data from this study that were analyzed and coded. First, there was the data elicited through the initial spot the difference tasks. In addition, the stimulated recall comments that were provided by students and teachers were also analyzed and coded. In an effort to correlate the findings from this study with previous research, the data was coded in the same manner as in the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000).

### 5.1 Analysis of Feedback Episodes

The first set of data was initially reduced by isolating each of the feedback episodes that occurred during the dyadic interactions. This enabled the total number of oral feedback occurrences to be determined. These feedback episodes were then individually coded according to both error and feedback types (Mackey et al, 2000). First, each of the feedback episodes was categorized “based on the error type that triggered the feedback” (Mackey et al, 2000). The following error categories were used: phonological, lexical, morphosyntactic, and semantic errors (Mackey et al, 2000). In addition to the coding schema used by Mackey et al (2000), each of the feedback occurrences were also coded as either a recast or prompt.

## 5.2 Analysis of Stimulated Recall Comments

The stimulated recall comments were also coded in an effort to analyze learner perceptions of interactional feedback. This data was coded according to the same six categories used by Mackey et al (2000): lexical, semantic, phonological, morphosyntactic, no content, and unclassifiable. Stimulated recall comments were classified into these categories as a result of the stated perceptions of the learners regarding each episode of feedback.

The phonological category was operationalized as “specific comments about pronunciation” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 482) or nonnativelike accents. The following are examples of student stimulated recall comments about phonology.

- Student Recall: *Yea, cause my pronunciation is different. Yea, it was wrong. Yea.*
- Student Recall: *Something is wrong. The ball. She is gonna correct me. Yea, here she corrects me. I knew the word, but the pronunciation was just kinda different.*

The lexical category of this schema was operationalized as “specific comments about a known or unknown word, including the provision of a synonym and comments about a synonym, or the word itself” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 481). Numerous examples of student comments about the lexis are provided.

- Student Recall: *She will change my words to tell me the exactly the words is what.*
- Student Recall: *Oh, for me, I don't know exactly how to call this building name, I don't know the word. She will ask me some kind of, and I will ask her how, it's like romantic and to say some information to her, and she will tell me what exactly it is.*

The morphosyntactic category was operationalized as comments about the formation and structure of sentences, word order, and particular aspects of grammar such as verb tense and articles (Mackey et al, 2000). The following are examples of student stimulated recall comments about morphosyntax.

- Student Recall: *Uh, I was, I was just thinking about exactly what I just said. She was just making, she was just correcting my sentence and making understand me more.*
- Student Recall: *Yea, I'm really happy. She correct me because I said two person and she said two people. It makes me better.*

The semantic category of this schema was operationalized as comments made by learners about “communicating meaning, creating understanding, or being unable to express an intended meaning” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 482). Essentially, this category contained comments focused on the meaning or content of the original interactions. Examples of student comments about semantics are provided.

- Student Recall: *I was thinking that, ah, yes, the teacher has children in her picture. I understand what she want to describe.*
- Student Recall: *What, what do you mean? She ask me a question and I answer, how many guy are in the boat, so we can find how our pictures is different.*

The last two categories demand further elaboration. Comments were categorized as no content if they were instances “in which the subject participated verbally in the recall, yet said nothing about the content” (Mackey et al, 2000, p. 482). The following are examples of comments that were categorized as no content.

- Student Recall: *She, she don't know, I don't know.*
- Student Recall: *We both, we are not sure. Nothing to write on the paper.*

Furthermore, comments were categorized as unclassifiable if they were instances in which the learner gave a response that did not fit into one of the aforementioned categories (Mackey et al, 2000).

- Student Recall: *Yea, I like what she said, something to dig.*
- Student Recall: *I was surprise. It is the first time she knows what I have seen.*

Finally, these two sets of data were triangulated in an effort to relate learner perceptions to error and feedback types. This enabled the researcher to determine how much feedback the learners recognized during the interactions and whether the learners accurately perceived the target of that feedback. Moreover, the data was also used to investigate where there is a disconnect between teacher intentions and student perceptions of interactional feedback. Lastly, it also served to ascertain whether learners recognized particular types of feedback more than others.

## 6.0 Results: Description of Feedback Episodes

Each of the feedback episodes elicited through the task-based dyadic interactions was isolated and tabulated (n=79). The average number of feedback episodes provided to each participant was 9.8, and ranged from 7 to 14 per subject. Teachers provided the most feedback in response to lexical errors (n=31), followed by morphosyntactic errors (n=29), and phonological errors (n=17). No feedback was provided in response to semantic errors. The study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) also elicited a minimal number of

semantic feedback episodes. The following table provides an overview of the feedback provided by the teachers in regard to the type of error which triggered each episode.

Error Type	Number	Percentage
Phonological	17	22%
Lexical	31	39%
Morphosyntactic	29	37%
Semantic	0	0%
Unclassifiable	2	2%

Table 1: Feedback Episodes by Error Type.

In addition, a small number of feedback episodes (n=2) were unable to be categorized according to error type due to ambiguity. Essentially, these feedback episodes were not provided in response to specific errors. Instead, they were used to respond to interactions in which the speech of the learners was completely inaudible or incomprehensible. Consequently, these feedback episodes (n=2) were excluded from the analysis.

Each of the feedback episodes was also categorized by feedback type according to the dichotomous distinction between prompts and recasts (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Egi, 2010). Feedback was nearly always provided in the form of recasts (n=75), whereas the provision of prompts was minimal (n=2). The following table provides an overview of the types of feedback provided by the teachers during the dyadic task-based interactions.

Feedback Type	Number	Percentage
Recasts	75	97%
Prompts	2	3%

Table 2: Feedback Episodes by Feedback Type

The above data highlights the degree to which the teachers in this study relied on recasts as their primary means of providing interactional feedback. Though determining the reason for this discrepancy is beyond the scope of this study, some researchers have suggested that teachers often rely on the use of recasts due to their implicit and unobtrusive nature (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Amar & Spada, 2006).

Though prompts were not often used as a means of providing interactional feedback, the teachers in this study did incorporate prompt moves such as elicitations or clarification requests into numerous feedback episodes which also contained recasts. These prompt moves were nearly always followed by the provision of the correct form of the erroneous utterance. Considering this is the defining characteristic of recasts, these feedback episodes were ultimately categorized as recasts rather than prompts. The following interaction is an example of this combined use of prompt and recast moves within a single feedback episode.

- NS: *What does the magazine or newspaper say?*  
 NNS: *Ah, I'm not sure...playing cards? [pronunciation unclear].*  
 NS: *Playing cards?*  
 NNS: *I'm not sure.*  
 NS: *Okay, mine I can see it, it says train crash. Does yours say train crash?*  
 NNS: *I don't know.*  
 NS: *Mine the first letter is t. What about yours?*  
 NNS: *Maybe, I don't know exactly. The second word is crash...pl....crash...*  
 NS: *Plane crash. I think yours says plane crash.*  
 NNS: *I think...P...L...A...N...E...*  
 NS: *Plane. Yea, that's a difference.*

In this particular interaction, the teacher first repeated the learner's nonnativelike pronunciation of the phrase *plane crash*, in an effort to highlight the error and prompt the student to modify their pronunciation. The interaction continued, and the learner did not correct their erroneous utterance; as a result, the teacher ultimately reformulated the error the utterance by providing nativelike pronunciation of the phrase. Therefore, feedback episodes such as this were categorized as recasts rather than prompts.

### 6.1 Description of Student Stimulated Recall Comments

The majority of the student comments during the stimulated recall interviews were about lexis (n=23) and semantics (n=22). Comments about morphosyntax (n=10) and phonology (n=3) occurred considerably less frequently. In addition, the subjects were unable to provide comments in response to nearly a fifth of the feedback episodes (n=13), and a number of comments contained information that could not be classified into any of the other aforementioned categories (n=6). The following table provides an overview of the linguistic content of the student stimulated recall interviews.

Comment Type	Number	Percentage
Phonological	3	4%
Lexical	23	30%
Morphosyntactic	10	13%
Semantic	22	29%
No Content	13	17%
Unclassified	6	8%

Table 3: Linguistic Content of the Student Stimulated Recall Comments

### 6.2 Learner Recognition of Interactional Feedback

The first research question inquired about whether ESL learners recognize interactional feedback. The results revealed that the participants recognized roughly three-fourths of the feedback episodes (n=58), and were unable to recognize the

remaining fourth (n=19). The feedback episodes that were not recognized by the learners were either provided stimulated recall comments that could not be classified or which lacked content entirely. The following table provides an overview of the number of feedback episodes verbally recognized by the learners during the stimulated recall interviews.

Feedback Episodes	Number	Percentage
Recognized by Learners	58	75%
Not Recognized by Learners	19	25%

Table 4: Number of Feedback Episodes Recognized by Learners

The above data highlights the finding that the learners in this study were generally able to recognize or notice feedback provided through interaction. The subsequent section investigates the accuracy of learner perceptions of interactional feedback, by determining the extent to which ESL learners are able to identify the target of interactional feedback.

### 6.3 Learner Perceptions of the Target of Interactional Feedback

The second research question inquired about whether ESL learners recognize the target of interactional feedback. The results of this study revealed that the accuracy of student perceptions varied according to the type of error which triggered the feedback. Thus, learner perceptions will be discussed categorically in regard to phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic errors. Naturally, learner perceptions of semantic feedback will not be discussed as no feedback was provided in response to semantic errors.

The participants in this study perceived lexical feedback most accurately. Of the total number of feedback episodes targeted at lexical errors (n=31), the learners recognized that this feedback was about lexis over half the time (n=18). Therefore, it is apparent that the learners were able to accurately determine the target of lexical feedback the majority of the time. This tendency is highlighted in the following example.

NNS:	<i>Also, there's like a poster, or I don't know the exact name.</i>
NS:	<i>Mhmm.</i>
NNS:	<i>The one like with the plane.</i>
NS:	<i>The banner.</i>
NNS:	<i>The banner. Yea.</i>
NS:	<i>Yea.</i>
Student Recall:	<i>Yea, I got it cause I know it's not a poster, because the poster's always in like a wall or anything. You know, I was just trying to explain, cause I know it's like, it isn't a poster. So, I was trying to explain, and she got it, and then she told me what is it called. Yea.</i>

In this sample interaction, the learner was unable to produce the target word *banner*. Thus, the teacher provided this lexical item through a recast. Subsequently, during the stimulated recall interview, the student clearly identified this feedback episode as being about an unknown word. This indicates the learner was aware that this feedback was lexical in nature.

Lexical feedback was not, however, always perceived accurately by the participants in this study. The most common misconception about lexical feedback was that it was about semantics. The learners misidentified lexical feedback as being about semantics roughly a fifth of the time (n=6). Furthermore, the remaining fifth of the lexical feedback episodes were classified as either no content or unclassifiable (n=6), suggesting they were not recognized by the learners at all. This common propensity of learners to perceive lexical feedback as being about semantics is illustrated in the following example.

NNS: *And there is a man in the sea, and he is wearing like for diving?*  
 NS: *He's wearing scuba gear?*  
 NNS: *Yea, like for diving.*  
 Student Recall: *She want to make sure he is to diving.*

Thus, the above data demonstrates that although the learners generally perceived lexical feedback accurately, numerous feedback episodes targeted at lexical errors were still either not recognized or misinterpreted by the learners. The following table provides an overview of learner perceptions of lexical feedback.

Perception	Number	Percentage
Lexical	19	61%
Semantic	6	19%
No Content	4	13%
Unclassifiable	2	7%

Table 5: Learner Perceptions of Lexical Feedback

The learners were able to recognize the target of morphosyntactic and phonological feedback considerably less often than lexical feedback. Of the total number of feedback episodes targeted at morphosyntactic errors (n=29), the learners recognized that this feedback was about morphosyntax slightly over a third of the time (n=10). The following interaction provides an example of morphosyntactic feedback being perceived accurately by an ESL learner.

NNS: *On the right, on the right the picture.*  
 NS: *On the right side of the picture.*  
 NNS: *Yea.*  
 Student Recall: *She correct me, right side of the picture.*



Like lexical feedback, morphosyntactic feedback was often misinterpreted as semantic feedback. Morphosyntactic feedback was misidentified by learners as being about semantics roughly a third of the time (n=10). Stimulated recall comments from the students indicated that they often interpreted morphosyntactic feedback as being about communicating or confirming meaning. The following interaction is an example of this common misconception.

- NS: *What does your newspaper say?*  
 NNS: *Mine says there like an airplane in the sky, written eat food?*  
 NS: *Oh, so I see, the airplane in the sky has a sign that says eat food? Mine says drink water.*  
 NNS: *Oh, okay.*  
 Student Recall: *Uh, I was, I was just thinking about exactly what I just said. She was just making, she was just correcting me and making understand me more.*

Furthermore, the learners were unable to provide comments in response to nearly a fourth of the feedback targeted at morphosyntactic errors (n=7). Learners also provided a small number of comments in response to morphosyntactic feedback that could not be classified (n=2). This suggests that the learners did not recognize nearly a third of the feedback targeted at morphosyntax. Thus, it is evident from the above data that the learners were generally not able to accurately recognize the target of morphosyntactic feedback. The following table provides an overview of learner perceptions of morphosyntactic feedback.

Perception	Number	Percentage
Morphosyntactic	10	34.5%
Semantic	10	34.5%
No Content	7	24%
Unclassifiable	2	7%

Table 6: Learner Perceptions of Morphosyntactic

Learners perceived phonological feedback the least accurately. Of the total number of feedback episodes targeted at phonological errors (n=17), the learners most often perceived the feedback as being about semantics (n=6). This further highlights the tendency of the learners in this study to interpret interactional feedback as being about semantics. The following interaction is an example of this trend.

- NS: *What does your airplane say? Does it have a sign?*  
 NNS: *Um, yea, eat food [pronunciation unclear].*  
 NS: *Eat food?*  
 NNS: *Yea.*

Student Recall: *Yea. Uh, ah, she ask me about the airplane. I told her, yea, I have, but I was, I don't know, there is no difference between the writing here. She was asking me about what do you have the writing, and I say it is eat food. I try to describe the difference.*

The learners also commonly misidentified the target of phonological feedback as being about lexis (n=4). The subsequent interaction provides an example of this phenomenon.

NNS: *Um, in some store, we have the words, its name...*  
 NS: *Yes.*  
 NNS: *For me, it is fishing and keps [pronunciation unclear].*  
 NS: *Is it a food store?*  
 NNS: *Yea, I think so.*  
 NS: *Okay, so it says fish and...*  
 NNS: *Clubs [pronunciation unclear].*  
 NS: *Maybe chips.*  
 NNS: *Chips.*  
 Student Recall: *Well, I say the wrong word for the fish, and I say the clubs, and she say like it is the food store, and she tell me to change the words. I say clubs and she say chips, so I can remember this word is chips.*

The learners did accurately perceive phonological feedback a small number of times (n=3). These numbers clearly highlight the fact that the target of phonological feedback was the least salient to the ESL learners in this study. The following interaction is an example of a learner accurately perceiving phonological feedback.

NNS: *Behind the guy holding the... [speech unintelligible]*  
 NS: *Holding the what?*  
 NNS: *The bull. [pronunciation of ball is unclear]*  
 NS: *Oh, the ball.*  
 NNS: *Yea, the ball.*  
 Student Recall: *Something is wrong. The ball. She is gonna correct me. Yea, here she corrects me. I knew the word, but the pronunciation was just kinda different.*

In addition, the learners were unable to provide comments in response to 12% of the phonological feedback episodes (n=2), and the comments provided in response to an additional 12% were unable to be classified (n=2). This suggests that the learners were unable to recognize nearly a fourth of the phonological feedback episodes. The following table provides an overview of learner perceptions of phonological feedback.

Perception	Number	Percentage
Phonological	3	18%
Lexical	4	23%
Semantic	6	35%
No Content	2	12%
Unclassifiable	2	12%

Table 7: Learner Perceptions of Phonological Feedback

#### 6.4 Learner Perceptions by Feedback Type

The third research question inquired about whether ESL learners recognize particular types of feedback more than others. More specifically, this question sought to investigate the differential recognition of prompts and recasts. Unfortunately, the results of this study yielded little insight on the issue. Due to the fact that the teachers in this study relied almost exclusively on the use of recasts as a means of interactional feedback (n=75) and the use of prompts was very limited (n=2), a reliable analysis could not be conducted. Consequently, the findings were inconclusive. The ambiguous nature of numerous feedback episodes which contained both prompt and recasts moves further contributed to the inability to draw a meaningful conclusion. Thus, further research is needed to analyze the comparative perceptions of prompts and recasts.

#### 6.5 Teacher Intentions and Learner Perceptions of Interactional Feedback

The previously described data reveals the disconnect between teacher intentions and learner perceptions of interactional feedback. To further highlight this commonly occurring disconnect, stimulated recall interviews were conducted with the teachers following half of their dyadic interactions with the students. The discrepancies between many of the comments provided by the teachers and students clearly demonstrate that they often did not perceive interactional feedback in the same manner.

Though the learners were able to recognize feedback provided through interaction the majority of the time, their perceptions of the target of that feedback were generally inaccurate. The learners were particularly inaccurate in their perceptions of morphosyntactic and phonological feedback. To further correlate this finding, numerous teacher and student stimulated recall comments may be cited. For instance, the following interaction provides an episode in which the teacher and student had varying views of phonological feedback.

NS:	<i>Is there like a newspaper?</i>
NNS:	<i>Uh, yea.</i>
NS:	<i>What does it say?</i>
NNS:	<i>Plane crash. [pronunciation of crash unclear].</i>
NS:	<i>Ah, plane crash.</i>
NNS:	<i>Yea.</i>

- Student Recall: *Uh, I was just thinking about I had a hard time to see it, I could not see it clear, so I got closer to see what she was talking about.*
- Teacher Recall: *Here I was just correcting the pronunciation of the word he used. And maybe making sure to clarify what he was talking about.*

While the stimulated recall responses clearly demonstrate that the teacher was providing feedback in an effort to correct pronunciation, the learner did not allude to any knowledge of the correction of a phonological error. Instead, the learner commented specifically about communicating meaning and understanding during the spot the difference task.

Further examples of discrepancies between teacher intentions and student perceptions can also be found in episodes of morphosyntactic and lexical feedback. The following interaction demonstrates a disconnect between the teacher and student regarding morphosyntactic feedback:

- NNS: *Oh, he knee down.*
- NS: *Ah, he's kneeling down.*
- NNS: *Yea.*
- Student Recall: *Yea, she said, like, I was talking about that person, and I couldn't see he's kneeling down. She just, she said what he is doing in the knee.*
- Teacher Recall: *The student was describing what a person was doing, so I corrected the student's conjugation with the verb kneeling.*

It is again evident that the teacher and student in this interaction were experiencing a disconnect in regard to the feedback provided. The teacher clearly stated that their recast was intended to reformulate the syntactic structure of the erroneous utterance, more specifically, the verb conjugation. The student, on the other hand, perceived the feedback as a meaning-based description of what was occurring in the picture. Likewise, the following interaction depicts a similar divergence between the teacher and student in regard to lexical feedback:

- NNS: *The building has also banner, says fish and chips.*
- NS: *Ah, my building, it's a sign. I don't know if it's a banner, it just says directly on the side of the building on a sign. On mine it says kebabs.*
- NNS: *Oh. Oh, yea.*
- Student Recall: *Um, actually, I don't. I didn't, I'm not thinking. I just expect that oh, we found one more thing.*
- Teacher Recall: *This one I actually explained a little bit, maybe I didn't explain it enough. I wanted to tell the student*

*that it's not usually called a banner when it's a sign on a building.*

Though the teacher clearly highlighted the erroneous use of the word *banner* in this interaction by replacing it with a more appropriate word, the student did not recognize this reformulation. Instead, the student merely acknowledged the fact that they had found one more difference between their pictures. Essentially, the learner again commented on the meaning of the interaction, rather than the intended target of the feedback.

Thus, the data clearly indicates that there is in fact a disconnect between teacher intentions and student perceptions of interactional feedback. Though the students were often able to recognize feedback provided through interaction, they typically misinterpreted the target of that feedback. Specific trends regarding the disconnect between teacher intentions and learner perceptions of interactional feedback will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent section.

## 7.0 Discussion

The results of this study revealed that while learners were generally able to recognize oral feedback in conversational interaction, they were typically inaccurate in their perceptions of the target of that feedback. This finding correlates with that of Mackey et al (2000) which also found that ESL learners had difficulty accurately identifying the target of interactional feedback. Furthermore, the results clearly indicated that the accuracy of learner perceptions of interactional feedback varied widely by the type of error which triggered the feedback.

Notably, the learners perceived lexical feedback the most accurately. The students were able to accurately identify the target of lexical feedback roughly two-thirds of the time (61%). The ESL learners in the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) were also generally accurate in their perceptions of lexical feedback, as they were able to identify the target of lexical feedback over four-fifths of the time (83%). Thus, the findings from this study strongly corroborate those from Mackey et al (2000) in regard to learner perceptions of lexical feedback. This indicates that lexical feedback is typically the most salient to learners in conversational interaction. These findings strongly correlate with the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) in terms of lexis. Essentially, the provision of interactional feedback appears to be helpful to learners in regard to the acquisition of lexical forms in the target language (Mackey et al, 2000).

The target of morphosyntactic feedback was typically not perceived accurately by the learners in both this study and that of Mackey et al (2000). While the learners in this study accurately identified the target of morphosyntactic feedback roughly a third of the time (34%), the ESL learners in the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) perceived morphosyntactic feedback accurately slightly over a tenth of the time (13%).

The majority of the morphosyntactic feedback in both studies was instead perceived as being about either semantics or lexis (Mackey et al, 2000). This finding indicates that the

target of morphosyntactic feedback is generally not salient to language learners. This suggests interactional feedback targeted at morphosyntax may not be that helpful to learners in terms of noticing and acquiring target syntactic forms. Mackey et al (2000) point out that, “with such a small percentage of morphosyntactic feedback being recognized as being about morphosyntax, the window of opportunity for these learners to notice grammar in interaction may have been rather small” (p. 488). Thus, these findings contradict the claims of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) in regard to morphosyntax (Mackey et al, 2000).

The learners in this study were generally inaccurate in their perceptions of phonological feedback (18%). This finding sharply contrasts the results from previous research which found that target of phonological feedback was generally perceived accurately (Mackey et al, 2000). The ESL learners in the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) accurately identified the target of phonological feedback nearly two-thirds of the time (60%). Thus, the results of this study yield little in terms of substantiating the findings from Mackey et al (2000) in regard to learner perceptions of phonological feedback. As a result, it remains unclear to what degree ESL learners are able to recognize the target of phonological feedback. Likewise, the benefits of interaction in aiding the acquisition of L2 phonological forms also remains in question.

The data from both this study and that of Mackey et al (2000) clearly highlights the disconnect that exists between teacher intentions and student perceptions of interactional feedback, particularly in regard to morphosyntactic feedback. In addition, the learners in both studies misidentified the target of numerous feedback episodes about lexis and phonology. This disconnect also yields further insight regarding the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990). This theory claims that noticing is necessary for second language learning. More specifically, learners must be able to notice the gap between their utterances and targetlike forms (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The results from this study suggest that the learners often did not notice the gap between their erroneous utterances and the nativelike forms provided by the teachers. This was particularly true of morphosyntactic and phonological forms. Essentially, although the learners typically noticed interactional feedback when it occurred, their lack of recognition of the target of that feedback suggests that it may not have always been beneficial to their acquisition of target forms.

Though the teachers in this study provided no feedback in response to semantic errors, a significant number of the stimulated recall comments were about semantics (29%). The results of the study conducted by Mackey et al (2000) yielded similar results by finding that nearly a fourth of the student comments were about semantics (23%). This data clearly highlights the tendency of ESL learners to misinterpret interactional feedback as being targeted at communicating or confirming meaning, rather than at phonological, lexical, or morphosyntactic errors, as intended by teachers. Therefore, this suggests that many of the feedback episodes that were inaccurately perceived as being about semantics were instead interpreted as noncorrective repetitions regarding meaning. This finding aligns with previous research (Lyster, 1998; Amar & Spada, 2006). Lyster (1998) also

found that recasts and noncorrective repetitions were often used interchangeably and fulfilled similar roles. Thus, recasts may be ambiguous to learners in regard to their intended purpose. In another study, Amar and Spada (2006) further substantiated these results by finding that learners may misinterpret recasts due to their overlap with repetitions. Furthermore, Long (1996) claimed that learners may misinterpret feedback not as the provision of targetlike forms but as merely another way to convey the same meaning. Thus, as Mackey et al (2000) point out, learners “may not even perceive recasts as feedback” (p. 491). The following interaction provides an example of this ambiguous distinction between recasts and noncorrective repetitions:

NNS:	<i>There is airplane.</i>
NS:	<i>There is an airplane. [Pause] Yup, I have one.</i>
Student Recall:	<i>I think we both have an airplane. Yea.</i>

During this feedback episode, the teacher provided a recast in response to a syntactic error produced by the learner. It is clear that the learner did not notice the subtle gap between their utterance and the recast. Instead, the comment elicited through the stimulated recall interview suggests that the learner perceived the recast as a repetition to confirm meaning.

The following interaction provides an additional example of this  
The following interaction provides an additional example of this common tendency to misinterpret interactional feedback as being about semantics.

NNS:	<i>There is a children player...</i>
NS:	<i>Children playing?</i>
NNS:	<i>Yea.</i>
Student Recall:	<i>Yea, she ask me, is it...uh...is there a children playing? Like a question.</i>

In this interaction, the learner produced an utterance with an incorrect verb tense. Subsequently, the teacher provided a recast including the correct target verb form. Despite this focus on morphosyntax, the student’s comment focused on the fact that the teacher was asking a question in the process of creating understanding or communicating meaning. Once again, this suggests the learner misinterpreted the feedback as being about semantics rather than the target intended by the teacher.

It is important to note that these findings may be the result of the communicative nature of interaction (Mackey et al, 2000). Mackey et al (2000) point out that this may be the cause of the “low rate of accurate perception for morphosyntactic feedback” (p. 493). Essentially, because the primary goal of interaction is to communicate meaning and developing understanding, learners may naturally tend to devote the majority of their attention to the forms that pose the most serious threat to understanding, namely lexical and phonological usage (Mackey et al, 2000). Thus, this suggests that learners may be paying significantly more attention to meaning rather than form during interaction.

### 7.1 Pedagogical Implications

Though this study demonstrates that ESL learners often have difficulties recognizing and interpreting interactional feedback, research has consistently shown that the provision of feedback as a means of supporting L2 acquisition is more effective than instruction without the provision of feedback (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013; Lyster & Saito, 2006; Ammar & Spada 2006; Yang & Lyster, 2010; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009). Thus, ESL teachers should not be discouraged from incorporating oral feedback into their interactions with students. In addition, researchers have found that interactional feedback, particularly recasts, may be beneficial for purposes other than correction, such as emphasizing nativelike forms in the target language (Mackey et al, 2000).

In light of this study, teachers should consider that repetition may be necessary as interactional feedback may be difficult for learners to detect. In addition, the results suggest that teachers may need to provide more explicit feedback in response to morphosyntactic errors because it is generally difficult for learners to accurately perceive morphosyntactic feedback provided through interaction. Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that there are strategies that may be helpful for increasing noticing of interactional feedback such as the provision of enhanced feedback through computer programs or verbally emphasized feedback (Sagarra & Abbuhl, 2013). Therefore, while this study yielded further insight regarding learner perceptions and teacher intentions of interactional feedback, further research is needed.

### 7.2 Limitations

When considering the results of this study, there are a number of limitations that should be carefully considered. The most notable limitation of this study was the small sample size. Consequently, the number of feedback episodes elicited from the dyadic task-based interactions was also limited (n=79). Thus, the findings of this study should be approached cautiously in terms of generalization or application to broader contexts. Further research is needed involving a larger number of learners.

In addition, the conclusions that could be drawn in regard to the comparative recognition of prompts and recasts were inconclusive due to the small number of prompts elicited during the communicative tasks. Though this was one of the foci of the study, the teachers involved were instructed to provide interactional feedback in any form, in an effort to replicate the methodology from the study by Mackey et al (2000) as closely as possible. As a result, an extremely limited number of prompts were elicited during the dyadic task-based interactions. Therefore, no meaningful conclusions could be drawn in regard to the comparative perceptions of prompts and recasts. Furthermore, the lack of prompts limited the generalizability of the results in regard to various types of interactional feedback. Consequently, this study primarily yields insight in regard to learner perceptions of recasts. Thus, further research is clearly needed to determine whether learners perceive recasts and prompts differentially.



Furthermore, ambiguities between the categories in the coding schema raise additional concerns regarding validity, particularly in terms of the interpretation of the stimulated recall comments. The data in this study was rated by a single rater. Naturally, future studies on the topic of learner perceptions of interactional feedback should incorporate multiple raters to ensure greater reliability of the research findings.

Lastly, some researchers have also raised concerns regarding whether the verbal recognition of feedback during the stimulated recall interviews can be equated with noticing (Mackey et al, 2000). Though stimulated recall interviews are often used as a means of introspection, some researchers have argued that it is possible that feedback may in fact be noticed by learners, even if they do not explicitly verbalize recognition during the stimulated recall interviews. Mackey et al (2000) claim that “the absence of reports of perception does not mean that feedback was not perceived at some level, and perception does not automatically entail or imply L2 development or learning” (p. 493). This concern is further highlighted in this study through a number of student stimulated recall comments. There were instances where students produced uptake during the stimulated recall interviews despite being unable to verbalize the target of the given feedback episodes. This is clearly demonstrated in the following interaction.

NNS:	<i>Oh, he knee down.</i>
NS:	<i>Ah, he's kneeling down.</i>
NNS:	<i>Yea.</i>
Recall:	<i>Yea, she said, like, I was talking about that person, and I couldn't see he's kneeling down. She just, she said what he is doing in the knee.</i>

It is clear from the stimulated recall that the student believed the teacher was providing feedback in regard to semantics rather than morphosyntax as intended by the teacher. More specifically, the teacher reformulated the erroneous verb tense *knee* by providing the more nativelike verb tense *kneeling*. Though it initially appears that the learner did not accurately perceive the target of this feedback episode, closer analysis reveals that the learner produced uptake during the stimulated recall interview. Essentially, the student produced the correct verb tense during their introspection of the feedback episode. This suggests that the student noticed the discrepancy in their output on some level. Thus, the results of this study should be interpreted cautiously in terms of drawing conclusions about the degree to which learners were able to notice interactional feedback.

## 8.0 Conclusion

This study clearly demonstrates the complex nature of interactional feedback. Identifying the target of interactional feedback posed significant difficulties to the learners in both this study and that of Mackey et al (2000). The results indicate that the benefits of interactional feedback are greater for lexis and phonology, and are far more limited for morphosyntax. To benefit from interactional feedback, it is necessary for learners to first notice the gap between their utterances and target forms (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Therefore, ESL teachers may want to consider varying the explicitness

of their feedback and incorporating the use of strategies to further highlight the salience of target forms.

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## Appendix A

### Spot the Difference Pictures

